My Personal User Manual

Why a "user manual"? Governing bodies rely on strong collaboration and communication. Just as you'd want basic instructions before operating a complex system, it's helpful to understand how your colleagues work—how they process information, make decisions, and share information. This worksheet is a tool for individual reflection to help the Board come together as an even more effective team in a fast-moving, public-facing environment.

Instructions: Complete this worksheet before the March 3 retreat. Feel free to keep responses brief (1–3 sentences prompt). At the retreat, you'll choose what parts of the reflection below you'd like to share with colleagues.

1. My working style

How I typically operate as a Supervisor and how I show up in my work, such as: What energizes me; how I process information (quick responder, reflective thinker); how I participate in group discussions.

2. Best ways to work with me

What helps me collaborate effectively with colleagues and staff, such as: How to approach me with an idea or concern; how I prefer to receive feedback; what is not an effective approach

3. Communication preferences

How I communicate and how I prefer others communicate with me, such as: Preferred channels (email, text, call); what helps me absorb information (headlines first, full context, visuals); typical response time expectations

4. How I make decisions

How I approach complex issues and move toward a decision, such as: How I gather information; when I prefer collaboration vs. reflection; what I do when I feel stuck

5. How colleagues can work effectively with me

What helps me stay grounded and effective in meetings and shared work, such as: How I prefer people to flag issues or emerging problems; what helps me avoid surprises in public settings; signs I need more context or clarity

6. What I don't work well with

Behaviors or dynamics that make collaboration difficult for me, such as: Meeting habits that I find frustrating or inefficient; behaviors that slow down or derail my decision-making; dynamics that make it hard for me to stay focused or engaged.

7. How I stay effective under pressure

What helps me reset, recharge, and stay focused, such as: How I recharge; what helps me reset during busy periods; how I prefer to be acknowledged or appreciated

My Personal User Manual: Completed Example

1. My working style

I'm energized by making progress on clear policy goals and community outcomes. I'm a reflective thinker who likes a moment to process before weighing in. In group discussions, I tend to listen first and then offer a synthesis or next step.

2. Best ways to work with me

Approach me with a clear headline and the specific decision or input you need. I appreciate direct, respectful feedback, ideally one-on-one. I don't work well with last-minute surprises or being rushed without context.

3. Communication preferences

Email is best for anything substantive; text works for logistics or urgent matters. I absorb information best when I get the headline first, then supporting detail. I usually respond within 24 hours unless we're in budget season.

4. How I make decisions

I like to understand the tradeoffs, data, and community impact before deciding. I prefer to collaborate on big strategic questions but reflect individually on the details. When I'm stuck, I ask staff for additional framing or examples from other jurisdictions.

5. How colleagues can work effectively with me

I appreciate when colleagues flag emerging issues early so I'm not caught off guard in public settings. It helps when we're aligned on process and expectations before a meeting. If I seem quieter than usual, I may need more context or time to think through the implications.

6. What I don't work well with

Meeting habits that feel unfocused or inefficient make it harder for me to stay engaged. I struggle when decision-making slows down without a clear reason. I find it challenging when dynamics become dismissive or overly adversarial.

7. How I stay effective under pressure

A short walk or a few minutes of quiet helps me reset. I stay grounded by reconnecting to the purpose behind the work. I prefer appreciation that's specific and low-key rather than public recognition.